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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-first year

Identical letters dated 28 April 2016 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

Once again, we write to you to address the critical situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as a result of the grave breaches of international humanitarian and human rights law being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people, whom it continues to hold hostage to its nearly five-decade military occupation. We continue to call on the international community, especially the Security Council, to uphold its obligations to respect and ensure respect for international law in order to immediately halt all Israeli violations against the Palestinian people and their land and to take the measures necessary to prevent the situation from deteriorating even further.

It is beyond tragic that our repeated calls for action, including by the Security Council, to stop Israel's violations against the unprotected Palestinian people have fallen on deaf ears. Such silence and inaction have only allowed Israel, the occupying Power, to continue and even to intensify its devastating policies and practices against the Palestinian civilian population. A clear example of this took place just yesterday, Wednesday, 27 April 2016, when the occupying Power extrajudicially executed two more innocent Palestinians civilians.

According to many witnesses at the murder scene, Maram Saleh Hassan Abu Ismail, age 23, who was also five months pregnant, and her brother Ibrahim, age 16, were en route to Jerusalem to go to a medical appointment when they walked down a road that apparently was to be used only by vehicles, not pedestrians, at the Qalandiya military checkpoint near Ramallah, in the occupied West Bank. Israeli soldiers were yelling at them in Hebrew, a language that Maram and Ibrahim did not understand. Maram and Ibrahim's initial reaction was to stop walking. As Ibrahim went to grab his pregnant sister's hand to guide her to move in a different direction, Israeli occupying forces opened fire and shot her. Maram fell to the ground with her child in utero, and when her brother Ibrahim came to her aid, he too was shot and

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killed by Israeli forces. Tragically, Maram and Ibrahim were not only shot once, but rather, their bodies were riddled with more than 20 bullets, execution-style, which now appears to have become the preferred Israeli method of killing Palestinians.

A Palestinian bus driver present at the scene told journalists that the Israeli soldier who opened fire on Maram and Ibrahim was standing behind a cement block nearly 40 metres away from them at the time. As has been the case in multiple incidents, Israeli occupying forces falsely claimed that Maram "threw a knife in their direction". But eyewitnesses told journalists that Maram and Ibrahim did not appear to pose any threat to the occupying forces when they were shot at and murdered in broad daylight. This was corroborated by many other witnesses, with one stating that he saw soldiers even plant knives at the scene.

Again, the State of Palestine, whose people and land are under occupation, must pose a serious question to the international community: How many times will we hear the same fabrications by the occupying Power that all of the Palestinian civilians, including children, who are killed by the occupying Power are killed as a result of so-called "stabbing attempts"? These false allegations are being made by the same Israeli occupying forces that are armed to the teeth with the most lethal, sophisticated weapons, hiding behind armoured tanks and given the green light by occupying commanders to shoot to kill as they please without fear of punishment.

Does the international community really believe the false narrative by the occupying Power that Maram, a mother of a 6-year-old and a 4-year-old and also five months pregnant, "threw a knife" at an Israeli occupying force knowing that she would be killed on the spot given their total disregard for Palestinian life? And even if one were to believe the distorted narrative that she "threw a knife", the question then becomes, how is it that an Israeli soldier standing nearly 40 metres away does not think twice about shooting civilians over 20 times? Undoubtedly, the Israeli version of the story cannot be believed and the international community must question each and every detail of the distorted version of this incident and the many others like it. It can no longer be tolerated for Israeli forces to not only kill and get away with murder, but then to maliciously blame the murdered Palestinian victims for being killed when their crime was simply trying to go about their day under occupation and navigate through the unjust, cruel system imposed upon them and designed to infringe on every aspect of their lives and every single one of their inalienable human rights.

One needs only to recall the heinous story of the Israeli soldier, who is also a so-called medic, Elor Azaria, whose video recording shows him shooting his weapon at a wounded, unarmed Palestinian man who had been shot at an Israeli military checkpoint in Al-Khalil on 24 March 2016. The video, shot by Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, shows Abed al-Fatah al-Sharif lying on the ground, not receiving any medical attention, while Israeli forces and medics walk around him. Then Azaria calmly lifts his weapon, aims and shoots Abed in the head, killing him, execution-style. Even though he was arrested, he was released so that he could spend the Passover holiday with his family, in spite of the fact that the extrajudicial execution he had committed had been recorded and condemned by the entire world. Azaria was given a hero's welcome when he returned to his family and friends, which was preceded by a demonstration held in Tel Aviv with over 2,000 people rallying in support of him and his actions, in which they shouted slogans including "He is a hero." We call on the international community to condemn such

racist incitement and the glorification of the murder of Palestinians by Israelis and Israeli occupying authorities alike.

The fact of the matter is that the killings of Maram and Ibrahim and Abed al-Fatah are not isolated incidents. This has happened time and again, and with further inaction by the international community it will, sadly, continue. We therefore reiterate our call for international protection for the Palestinian people. International humanitarian law and the commitments undertaken for the protection of civilians in situations of armed conflict must be upheld as a matter of urgency in the State of Palestine, where civilian lives are under constant threat by the occupying Power, which has not only grossly abrogated its obligations, but also clearly relinquished them. Moreover, it is high time for justice to finally be served by holding fully responsible those who kill and commit crimes against Palestinian civilians. In this regard, the Palestinian leadership has officially called for an international investigation into the extrajudicial execution of Maram and Ibrahim. We also call for Israel to release video footage of the tragic incident at its military checkpoint.

While Israeli occupying forces continue their shoot-to-kill sprees, the Israeli Government continues to kill all prospects for peace and the possibility of a two-State solution with the continuation of its illegal settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. In this regard, on Saturday, 23 April 2016, occupying authorities delivered so-called notices to the Palestinian village of Jaloud in the northern occupied West Bank, informing Palestinian residents that 5,000 dunums (1,250 acres) of private land was slated for confiscation. It should be recalled that last year, Israel's so-called High Court of Justice ruled to "retroactively" sanctify the illegal Israeli outposts that clearly had been established in violation of international law. The so-called notice delivered to the Nablus-area village was signed by the Israeli army's head of Central Command, who cited bogus security claims and stated that "certain steps are needed to prevent terror attacks" and that because of this he had given orders to confiscate the land "for security reasons". The land will be declared "State land" and will fall under full control of the Israeli military.

As with other Israeli confiscation orders, the obvious aim of the confiscation order in Jaloud is to facilitate illegal settlement expansion and to ultimately connect so-called outposts with the adjacent "Shilo" settlement via Alon Road, a bypass highway segregated only for Israeli settler and military use. It should be noted that some 12 illegal settlements and 27 illegal settlement outposts are located in the Nablus district, housing around 23,000 Israeli settlers, most of them extremist settlers who continue to attack Palestinian civilians and cause damage to homes and property with complete impunity.

In this connection, we must also reiterate that we cannot separate Israeli settler violence from Israel's illegal settlement network across the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in grave breach of international humanitarian law and international criminal law as articulated in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. In this regard, settler violence also continues to intensify. This includes an incident that took place on Friday, 22 April 2016, when Israeli terrorist settlers attacked a Palestinian bus carrying Palestinian children near the illegal settlement of "Emmanuel" east of Qalqiliya, in the northern occupied West Bank. Terrorist settlers threw rocks at the moving bus, shattering its windows and causing panic to spread among the children who were riding the bus. We reiterate that Israel,

the occupying Power, is responsible for all of the crimes committed by the settlers it has illegally transferred to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and as such all settlers who commit crimes against Palestinian civilians must be held accountable.

The Israeli occupying forces also continue to routinely commit acts of aggression against the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip, which remains illegally and immorally blockaded by Israel. Among the most recent military attacks include the shooting this past Tuesday, 26 April, at Palestinian fishermen off the coast of the besieged Gaza Strip. Also on Tuesday, Israeli occupying forces carried out another military incursion into the Gaza Strip and levelled Palestinian land near Al-Shujaiyya, in the eastern part of Gaza. Israeli occupying forces enter Palestinian areas on both the land and sea sides of the Gaza Strip on a near-daily basis, placing Palestinian fishermen and farmers, as well as their livelihoods, at risk. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Israeli occupying forces made 40 incursions into the Gaza border area in the month of April alone.

Before concluding, I must draw attention to some of the other most recent crimes perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, in the period since our most recent letter to you:

16 April 2016

- Israeli occupying forces notified a Palestinian family of plans to demolish the family's home in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Al-Bustan.
- Israeli settlers forcibly prevented a Palestinian farmer, Ibrahim Salah, from accessing his farmland near the town of Al-Khader, south of Bethlehem.

17 April 2016

- Occupying forces detained 14 Palestinians, including 4 children, from across the West Bank and Jerusalem.
- A group of Israeli settlers and occupying forces carried out provocative tours into the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, in Jerusalem.

18 April 2016

- Israeli occupying forces detained four Palestinians and summoned two others for interrogation during predawn raids across Al-Khalil and Bethlehem.
- Dozens of children suffocated after inhaling tear gas shot at them by Israeli occupying forces in Al-Khalil and in Jerusalem.

19 April 2016

- Israeli occupying forces detained 24 Palestinians, including 3 girls, and summoned 3 others for interrogation during predawn raids across the West Bank.
- Occupying forces detained four Palestinian fishermen and seized their boats off the coast of Rafah, in southern Gaza.

- A Palestinian youth was hit and injured in the eye by a stun grenade, which was fired at him by an Israeli occupying force in Jerusalem.

20 April 2016

- Israeli occupying forces demolished the family house of Hussein Abu Ghush (age 17), who was killed by Israeli occupying forces on January 25 in yet another punitive demolition.
- Israeli occupying forces detained 42 Palestinians, including children, most of them during a predawn raid in Al-Issawiya, in East Jerusalem.

21 April 2016

- Israeli occupying forces assaulted a Palestinian youth, Ahmad Bassam Mohammad (age 21), near the village of Azzoun A-Atma, to the south of Qalqiliya.
- Occupying forces detained seven Palestinians, including a 14-year-old child, from across the West Bank.

22 April 2016

- A Palestinian bus was attacked by Israeli settlers throwing stones on a road near the settlement of "Emmanuel", shattering the bus windows and causing panic among the children riding the bus.

23 April 2016

- Israeli occupying forces delivered military notices to the Palestinian village of Jaloud, alerting residents that 5,000 dunums (1,250 acres) of private Palestinian land were slated for confiscation in order to pave a new road to serve illegal Israeli outposts and settlements.
- Occupying forces opened fire on Palestinian farmers in southern Gaza.
- Occupying forces arrested a journalist, Omar Nazzal, a member of the General Secretariat of the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate, at the bridge between the West Bank and Jordan, while en route to Bosnia to participate in the General Meeting of the European Federation of Journalists.

24 April 2016

- Occupying naval forces detained two Palestinian fishermen and seized their boats off the coast of Gaza.
- Occupying forces detained at least six Palestinian civilians, most of them during predawn and night raids across the West Bank.

25 April 2016

- Israeli occupying forces detained three Palestinians, and reports indicate that they also stole money and jewellery during those arrest raids in Al-Khalil and Jerusalem.

26 April 2016

- Israeli naval boats opened machine-gun fire on Palestinian fishermen off the coast of the Gaza Strip as occupying forces entered Palestinian land near Al-Shujaiyya and levelled the area.
- Occupying forces cracked down on a non-violent rally organized by Palestinian journalists near Ofer Israeli prison, south-west of Ramallah, in solidarity with Palestinian journalist Omar Nazzal, who was recently detained. There were multiple cases of suffocation due to excessive tear gas inhalation, and Saed Huwwari from Reuters news agency was injured after being hit with a stun grenade in his chest.

27 April 2016

- Israeli naval boats attacked Palestinian fishermen sailing within six miles of the shore of Gaza.
- Occupying forces shot and murdered two Palestinians, a young woman, Maram Saleh Hassan Abu Ismail (age 24), and her brother Ibrahim (age 16) at the illegal Qalandiya checkpoint near Ramallah.
- Occupying forces detained four Palestinians, including a disabled person.
- The occupying Power's bulldozers and armoured tanks crossed through the border fence with the Gaza Strip and levelled land east of the Al-Bureij refugee camp.

28 April 2016

- Israeli occupying forces arrested 10 Palestinians from Ramallah, Al-Khlail, Jenin and Jerusalem.
- Occupying forces opened gunfire on Palestinian farmers who were trying to access their land to the east of Khan Younis, in southern Gaza.
- Occupying forces shot and injured a Palestinian teen, Ahmad Masoud (age 17), when several Israeli settlers broke into the area of Joseph's Tomb, to the east of Nablus.

In the light of all of the above, we call again on the international community, particularly the Security Council, to act immediately to end Israel's impunity and resolve this conflict, which clearly constitutes a threat to international peace and security. The Israeli occupation must end, and the Palestinian people must realize justice and their inalienable rights, including to self-determination and freedom. The Palestinian leadership will continue to use all legitimate, peaceful, legal and non-violent means to achieve these goals. This includes our support for all international efforts, including the French initiative, which Israel rejected today. We must clearly state that the Israeli Government's continued disingenuous call for "bilateral negotiations" is not a call for the achievement of the two-State solution, but an attempt at legitimizing its occupation and its settlement enterprise, and it must be called out for what it is. Contributing to the de-escalation of tensions and to respect for international law should be viewed as an absolute necessity and the collective responsibility of all to ensure, not as a contradiction in any way with the aim of peace and security.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 584 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 15 April 2016 (A/ES-10/720-S/2016/349), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the
State of Palestine to the United Nations